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**A Neglected Pioneer of**  
**Higher Education**

**BY**

**William G. Roelker**

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## *Francis Wayland* *A Neglected Pioneer of Higher Education*

BY WILLIAM G. ROELKER

FRANCIS WAYLAND, fourth President of Brown University, who occupied the office for twenty-eight years, from 1827 to 1855, was the best known and probably the foremost educator of his time. The history of education is little studied, even by educators themselves, so it is natural that he has been overlooked in recent years. Dr. Charles F. Thwing, a noted historian of education, wrote that among the few college presidents of the early 19th century who might be described as educators was "Wayland of Brown."<sup>1</sup> Some historians have considered the establishment of tax-supported free public schools the most progressive step in mid-19th century social history and they have directed their attention to Horace Mann and Henry Barnard for their work in the public schools of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, to the neglect of men like Wayland who were active in every field of education. He would not have been so outstanding had he not been, in the sense in which Emerson used the expression, a representative man who is "not only representative, but participant. Like can only be known by like. The reason why he knows them is that he is of them."<sup>2</sup> Of Napoleon, Emerson wrote:

<sup>1</sup> See also, *A History of Higher Education in America* (New York, 1906), p. 317. "His noble conceptions of the instructor's office and work, carried out from the University by his pupils, and spread still more widely through his writings, did much to raise teaching in public estimation, through all its grades, to the dignity of a profession. They also drew upon him the attention of the country, and placed him by universal consent in the first rank of educators, without a superior, if not without an equal, in the land."—George I. Chace, *The Virtues and Services of Francis Wayland* (Providence, 1866), p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> R. W. Emerson, "The Uses of Great Men," *Works*, Centenary ed. (Cambridge, 1903), vol. 4, p. 11.



"The times, his constitution and his early circumstances combined to develop this pattern democrat. He had the virtues of his class and the conditions for their activity,"<sup>3</sup> this description perfectly suits Francis Wayland, a real democrat. Through the somewhat turgid eloquence from the sermon of eulogy by the Reverend Cyrus A. Bartol one can discern the sharp outline of the so-called "common man":

Yet he was of the people. Every drop of blood in his veins was in fellowship with the mass of mankind. He was democratic to the core, in his manners, habits, and thoughts. He never talked *down* to the community, or to any audience. He never put himself above his race. He knew nothing of better blood, but only of the *one* blood. By his instincts he hated, as by his vows he opposed, all tyranny and caste.<sup>4</sup>

Wayland's whole career was representative of the times in which he lived. He was born in New York City, March 11, 1796, three years after his parents had emigrated from Fromme, Somerset. His father quickly allied himself with a group of Baptists who persuaded him to dispose of a successful leather business to become a travelling preacher, and the education of the boy fell to his mother, a woman of high intellectual endowments and great force of character, from whom he acquired an intense love of liberty and hatred of intolerance which were the foundations of his character. Except for a few months under Daniel H. Barnes at Poughkeepsie, his schooling was indifferent until he had the good luck at the age of fifteen to be admitted to the sophomore class at Union College. His record was not brilliant. Yet there is no doubt he attracted the favorable attention of Dr. Eliphalet Nott, another college president who might deservedly be called an educator. Until the end of his sixty-two years as President, Eliphalet Nott was the trusted friend and stanch supporter of his pupil, Francis Wayland. After

<sup>3</sup> Emerson, "Representative Men," *Works*, vol. 4, p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> Cyrus A. Bartol, "The Good Man," *The Monthly Religious Magazine* (Nov., 1865), vol. 34, No. 5, pp. 257-68, at 261.



graduation Wayland began a stimulating association with Dr. Eli Burritt of Troy under whose guidance he received the medical instruction which enabled him, in 1816, to obtain a license to practice medicine. The necessity to decide where he should practice brought on a crisis which altered his whole life.

The atmosphere of the Wayland home was typically Baptist and deeply religious. Much time was devoted to learning collects and hymns, and to expounding the Scriptures; Wayland, however, seems to have been unaffected by these routine religious rites until he came to plan his medical future. Then he recognized that he had always had "a decided impression" that he should be a preacher of the gospel. No matter how much he desired, as a Baptist, he could not be a preacher until he became a member of the church, *i.e.*, he must first have a convincing religious experience or conversion and publicly profess his faith. He would then be eligible for baptism by immersion and admission to membership in the church and after a period of training he might be licensed to preach. Once the idea of being a preacher had emerged from his subconscious mind it grew rapidly and he deliberately set out to be converted, devoting much time to prayer and to reading the Scriptures to the exclusion of everything else. "I attended religious meetings . . . I read only religious books. I determined that, if I perished, I would perish seeking the forgiveness of God." Still, "A clear and convincing experience" was denied him.

A revival in Troy conducted by the Rev. Luther Rice was the occasion of his conversion.

Mr. Rice was a solemn and effective preacher who would have been listened to anywhere. But in addition he was a man who had given<sup>up</sup> all for Christ . . . to preach the gospel to the heathen. . . . He was the only American who had gone out into the darkness and had come back to tell us of what had existed there. I remember well the effect produced upon me. . . . For the first time I was constrained to believe that the



sentiments of my heart were in harmony with the gospel, that especially I loved God and that I loved all that God loved and that it would be a pleasure to devote my whole life to his service.<sup>5</sup>

It was a complete conversion, and thenceforward Wayland devoted his whole life to teaching the moral precepts of the gospel. The call to the ministry was so strong that he immediately gave up all thought of medicine and availed himself of an opportunity to enter Andover Theological Seminary as a charity student. Moses Stuart (Yale, 1799), Professor of the Sacred Languages, had charge of his class and was attracted to him from the first day and Wayland soon caught the spirit and enthusiasm of this great teacher of Exegetical and Biblical studies. At Andover he "learned how to study and how to teach the Bible."<sup>6</sup> And he soon accepted for his own, Professor Stuart's creed that "the Bible was first, midst, last, highest, deepest, broadest";<sup>7</sup> a belief which never wavered throughout his life.

At the end of the year he was saved from near starvation by an appointment as tutor at Union College and for the next four years he taught anything and everything in the curriculum and learned from Dr. Nott the unique methods of teaching and novel rules of college administration which had placed Union in the forefront of the colleges. It was then that he first came to know Dr. Nott and "that mutual love, respect and admiration was awakened which continued to grow for half a century."<sup>8</sup> In 1860 Wayland wrote:

<sup>5</sup> MS. Reminiscences, p. 34. In 1860, Francis Wayland wrote his Reminiscences "for his sons and not for publication." The manuscript is among the Wayland Papers, loaned to the writer by Mrs. Frances Wayland Williams, President Wayland's granddaughter.

<sup>6</sup> Francis Wayland and H. L. Wayland, *A Memoir of the Life and Labors of Francis Wayland, D.D., LL.D., Late President of Brown University* (New York, 1867), vol. 1, pp. 63-71; Chace, pp. 9-11. The *Memoir* is written in an eulogistic rather than critical vein; it is loosely organized and its index is inadequate but it includes much of the surviving correspondence.

<sup>7</sup> Edwards A. Park, *Discourse Delivered at the Funeral of Moses Stuart* (Boston, 1852), p. 38.

<sup>8</sup> Chace, p. 11.



To this remarkable man I owe very much. To no one have I applied so often for counsel, and from no one have I received advice so deeply imbued with Christian principle and far-seeing sagacity.

At times the note of adulation is fulsome and Wayland admits "these reminiscences seem, I suppose, to savor of the garrulity of age."<sup>9</sup>

Wayland's time was fully occupied with teaching, yet the desire to preach the gospel would not down and Dr. Nott, himself a famous preacher, helped him to prepare sermons which he delivered in nearby towns. In August, 1821, he received ordination and accepted pastoral charge of the First Baptist Church in Boston. In this step he acted with the approval of Dr. Nott and on the advice of Moses Stuart that it would bring him nearer to Brown University, the center of Baptist activities. "The cause there," wrote Stuart, "absolutely and imperiously demands a man like you. . . . Besides, Providence College [Brown] must have such trustees, or it is ruined forever. Radical changes must be made in order to save it. You [Baptists] want more weight, more literature here, to do this."<sup>10</sup> It would almost seem they were grooming him so early for the presidency.

This first venture on his own was not wholly successful, possibly because his preaching was too intellectual and too didactic for the congregation. But Wayland did capitalize on an opportunity to win a great personal success. The return of Mrs. Ann Hazeltine Judson, wife of Adoniram Judson, the Baptist missionary to Burma, had aroused great interest in foreign missions, and Wayland's sermon on *The Moral Dignity of the Missionary Enterprise*, delivered at Boston in 1823, made him a national figure among the Baptists. A smart printer, James Loring, Deacon of the church, heard the sermon, and foreseeing its popular appeal

<sup>9</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 93.

<sup>10</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 119, original letter in Wayland papers.



had it printed as a pamphlet which passed through many editions and was widely distributed throughout the country. Two discourses, *The Duties of an American Citizen*, very nationalistic in tone—likewise published by the enterprising Deacon Loring—added to Wayland's fame. He was rapidly outgrowing his North End church.

In the spring of 1826, Alonzo Potter, Dr. Nott's son-in-law and later Episcopal Bishop of Pennsylvania, resigned his professorship at Union College. Dr. Nott immediately offered Wayland the chair of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics which he accepted and began his duties in September. Hardly had he begun—and before his wife had removed from Boston—when the movement came into the open to dismiss Dr. Asa Messer from the presidency of Brown, allegedly because of his growing tendency towards Unitarianism, actually because of the demoralized condition of the college.

From the postscripts to Wayland's devoted, but routine, letters to his wife<sup>11</sup> in Boston it is evident that he promptly engaged in an active, but very secret, campaign to obtain the appointment as president. He wrote her on October 5th:

If any calculations are made upon me it would be easy definitely to inform me of it, & if not it is wrong to keep me in this state of betweenity.

And on October 15th: "I was never so much on tenter hooks before." His anxiety was soon relieved, for on October 13th, Nicholas Brown had written Wayland that he intended to propose his name for the presidency, "to which there will not be one dissenting voice."<sup>12</sup>

On September 6, 1804, Nicholas Brown had given \$5,000 for the establishment of a professorship of Oratory and Belles Lettres, and in recognition of this gift, and many

<sup>11</sup> MS. among Wayland papers.

<sup>12</sup> MS. Letter, Nicholas Brown, Providence, October 13, 1826, to Francis Wayland, Jr., Union College, Brown University Archives.



other donations from members of the Brown family, the name was changed from Rhode Island College to Brown University. He was the most influential trustee and it would seem that Wayland had nothing to worry about, nomination was equivalent to election. Wayland heard of some opposition as the time for the meeting drew near and wrote to Dr. Nott for advice. The latter replied:

Union College,  
14 December, 1826.

You must be prompt and decided in your course—A man should not try to get what he can not get—or take what is not worth taking—if there is not a clear deck and a cordial crew, it will be very difficult to give an old ship a new direction—And attempts to do [so] to this will make secret heart-burnings if not open mutiny—If things are go[ing] on in the old way you dont want the place—<sup>13</sup>

No opposition developed; Francis Wayland was duly elected President of Brown University, December 13, 1826. He was well qualified for the position. Moses Stuart had schooled his mind; Dr. Nott had given him practical training in teaching and college administration; five years in the pulpit had taught him to prepare a sermon and he had become a powerful speaker.

On October 18, two months before the election, Nicholas Brown had arranged with Dr. Nott for Wayland to remain at Union until he took office in February, 1827. "It appeared to my individual view," Brown wrote to Dr. Nott, "that Mr. Wayland would acquire many good ideas in the government and also in the course of study to be pursued [at Brown University] by his being this fall in the notice of Your Practices."<sup>14</sup>

What manner of man was this youthful college president, not yet turned thirty-one? Let us examine him through the

<sup>13</sup> MS. Letter, Eliphalet Nott, Union College, 14 December, 1826, to F. Wayland, Jr., Boston, Wayland Papers.

<sup>14</sup> MS. Letter, Nicholas Brown, Providence, October 18, 1826, to Dr. E. Nott, Union College, Brown University Archives.



eyes of one who knew him intimately, his pupil and later his colleague, James Burrill Angell, Brown '49, afterwards well known as President of the University of Michigan. "No one could look upon that tall, spare form . . . upon that massive forehead, those piercing dark eyes gleaming through the shaggy, over-hanging eyebrows, that prominent nose, and those firm lips, without feeling instinctively that Dr. Wayland was born to command."<sup>15</sup> He had an extraordinary influence over young men which "arose partly from his majestic presence, but mainly from that imperial spirit, corresponding with the external presence, the existence and power of which every one perceived who came in contact with him."<sup>16</sup>

One might continue indefinitely to quote favorable comments, and even the occasional criticism recognizes the driving force of the man, for example: "At the top of College Hill Dr. Wayland was ruling with a rod of iron,"<sup>17</sup> but "If the rules of labor and conduct which he enforced, were sometimes deemed unduly severe, they were such as he prescribed for himself and which he consistently followed."<sup>18</sup> He wrote of himself, "I am a perfect drayhorse. I am in harness from morning to night, and from one year to another. I am never turned out for recreation."<sup>19</sup> If others failed in the performance of their duties he supplied "the deficiency by additional labor on his own part." He lived up to his precept: "Nothing can stand before days' works."<sup>20</sup>

It is not surprising that he became the accepted leader in educational, philanthropic and large public affairs of the

<sup>15</sup> "The Late President Wayland," *Hours at Home* (Dec., 1865), vol. 2, p. 190.

<sup>16</sup> [Henry Barnard], "Educational Labors and Publications of Francis Wayland, D.D.," *Barnard's American Journal of Education* (Dec., 1863), vol. 13, p. 775; see also, Kendall Brooks, *The Baptist Quarterly*, (Jan., 1868), vol. 2, p. 71.

<sup>17</sup> "Reminiscences of a Graduate," *Providence Journal*, May 17, 1903.

<sup>18</sup> R. I. Society for the Encouragement of Domestic Industry, *Transactions*, 1861 (Providence, 1862), p. 124.

<sup>19</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, p. 357.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 214-6.



group of manufacturers and merchants affiliated with the firm of Brown & Ives, which dominated the Rhode Island scene. He assisted them in the establishment of the Butler Hospital for the Insane (1844) and the Rhode Island Hospital (1863). In the crisis of the Dorr Rebellion (1842) President Wayland was a mainstay of the established government. Following the panic of 1857 he was chairman of a committee chosen by the citizens of Providence to relieve the terrible distress. He was active in prison reform, temperance, and similar movements. Though Dr. Caswell was delivering the usual sermon in eulogy he did not exaggerate when he said: "In every public enterprise Wayland's presence was felt as no other man's was. All waited to hear the utterance of his voice. In every enterprise among us for the moral and religious improvement of the community . . . his counsel was sought almost as an indispensable condition of success. It may justly be said that he stood among us as the first citizen of Rhode Island."<sup>21</sup>

So much for Francis Wayland the man and his early career. Let us now turn to what was known in the parlance of the day as his Educational Labors.

The first task confronting Wayland was the restoration of college discipline. President Asa Messer had been in office twenty-four years, and he had lost control of both students and faculty. A sketch drawn on the wall of University Hall by a member of the class of 1830 "represented very well the prevailing current of opinion and criticism. It comprised two figures. Dr. Messer, seated in his old chaise, with reins fallen, and whip lost, was jogging leisurely on. Directly before him and in clear view, lay the gulf of perdition. Near by was Dr. Wayland, in a buggy of the newest fashion, harnessed to an animal on whose build and muscle two-forty was plainly written. He was headed in the same direction, and

<sup>21</sup> Alexis Caswell, *Providence Journal*, Oct. 5, 1865; see also Chace, p. 34.



with taut rein and knitted brow and kindling eye, was pressing with all his might forward."<sup>22</sup>

Within twenty-four hours of Wayland's assumption of office a marked change was noted in the college. In the *Memoir* his sons wrote he had "a distinct and clearly-defined idea of what a college should be, and could be made, and he did not delay an instant to apply to his theory the test of practice."<sup>23</sup> Promptly he put into effect the measures planned with the aid of Dr. Nott, reforms designed to make "study not a sham, but a reality, and discipline not a form, but a fact."

The new college laws required that officers, that is to say professors and instructors, were to occupy apartments in college during the day and evening and to visit the rooms of students at least twice in every twenty-four hours. Spirituous liquors were banished and so was the barrel of ale always kept on tap in the cellar to which all students had free access. The President had all his dealings with the parent, instead of the pupil, and he was given exclusive power to dismiss a student if in his judgment it was to the best interests of the institution. A system of marks was introduced and the results communicated to the parent at the end of the term. All of these laws went into effect with the beginning of the term in February, 1827.<sup>24</sup> Such rules were common in the colleges of the day and they invited trouble. The students frequently indulged in schoolboy pranks—Wayland told President Everett of Harvard "A pony had been carried up two flights of stairs and put in his recitation room."<sup>25</sup> But in 1834 at Harvard a violent explosion occurred in chapel, now the Faculty room in University Hall,<sup>26</sup> and

<sup>22</sup> Chace, p. 15, drawing made by a classmate of 1830.

<sup>23</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 226.

<sup>24</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, pp. 205-6; Chace, pp. 13-6.

<sup>25</sup> Diary of Edward Everett, No. 166, p. 72 (April 26, 1847), at Mass. Hist. Soc.

<sup>26</sup> S. E. Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge, 1936), p. 253.



at the University of Virginia the Chairman of the Faculty was murdered.<sup>27</sup> Pursuing the disciplinary tactics of Eliphalet Nott, whose spy system enabled him to scotch a rebellion before it started, Wayland never had a revolt, and only one sit-down strike. His views in regard to discipline were "peculiar to himself," though no doubt strongly influenced by his training under Dr. Nott. They differed radically from the usual practice of treating each undergraduate offense as an individual case. He felt that such method of governing a public institution of instruction "would greatly impair, if it did not entirely destroy, the value of any college in which it should prevail." The very attempt to modify discipline to suit the peculiarities of the individual would cause the college to fail in one of its most important functions "as an intermediate place between the family and society, to prepare the student for entrance upon the practical duties of life."

Francis Wayland believed in the moral law, there was nothing of the pragmatist in him. "I came, therefore, to the conclusion, that the laws of a college should be simple, just, kind, and of such a character that they could be shown to be right and salutary, both to parents and pupils." Once established, these laws must be enforced and "by making every young man feel that he must be accountable for his own actions, prepare him for becoming a member of society, where this rule is to be enforced under more severe penalties." The more peculiar the young man, the more important it is that he shall learn to conform. The government of impulsive youth must "of necessity, be kind, conciliatory, persuasive, or, in a word, parental." But when these methods fail it must be distinctly understood that "punishment will inevitably

<sup>27</sup> John S. Patton, *Jefferson, Cabell and the University of Virginia* (New York, 1906), pp. 155-7; James B. Minor, "Historical Sketches of Virginia, Literary Institutions of the State—University of Virginia," *Old Dominion Magazine*, vol. 4, part 4 (June, 1870), pp. 326-30.



come, and come on all alike, without the shadow of partiality." As in a court of law, each case becomes a precedent, "and if the precedent be a bad one, it will never be forgotten, but will be pleaded without fail." Wayland, therefore, sought to settle each case "on true principles [which] would harmonize with every other case that might subsequently occur." The college laws, being laws and not pragmatic dicta, would become known to all. The seniors could point out to the younger students the "inevitable consequence" which followed any infraction.

"All this seems easy to be understood and easy to be accomplished," wrote Wayland, "and yet it is not exactly so." He acquired a "reputation of being a stern, unfeeling disciplinarian, who was determined to carry out college regulation regardless of the pain which he caused." This reputation he felt was undeserved as severe cases caused him "great mental distress" and demanded that he nerve himself to the work.

In another respect Wayland's "notions of college discipline" differed from the current practice. Since the early days of European universities, whose officers had established the right of "benefit of clergy," it was generally understood "that an undergraduate is amenable to no other laws than those of his college. . . . I have known [wrote Wayland] college officers to take very great pains to shield students from the consequences of their violation of municipal regulations." Wayland's "view of the matter was the reverse of all this. . . . The sooner a student discovers that he is amenable to the laws of society, like any other citizen, the better it will be for him." President Quincy of Harvard was the first, Wayland wrote, to take this position.<sup>28</sup>

Through Wayland's philosophy of college discipline runs a strong strain of legal thought. The history of English juris-

<sup>28</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 261-5; Morison, p. 252.



prudence fascinated him beyond all other mundane subjects, and he knew well the lives of the leading legal figures and derived therefrom "many appropriate illustrations and apposite anecdotes, with which he diversified and enriched his instructions."<sup>29</sup> When in England in 1841 he was tremendously impressed by a visit to the Courts of Law and Equity:

Here I beheld the majesty of law. Here I saw a temple erected for the habitation of Justice. Here I saw a barrier to the encroachments of aristocracy, and a rampart against the waves of popular fury. I felt that the voice of law uttered there was heard and obeyed throughout the land, and I knew that I was in a region of civilization, of justice, nay, of Christianity; for out of the limits of Christendom, where shall all of this or any of it be found?<sup>30</sup>

Since he held such sentiments it is not surprising that after resigning from Brown, he wrote his friend the Honorable Ellis Lewis, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, that the only other position he would like was that "of a judge of a court whose decisions involved grave questions of right."<sup>31</sup>

A practice of permitting professors to profess their subjects by absent treatment, while holding positions in Congress or elsewhere, had grown up in all the colleges. About this time, however, there was a reversal in practice, and Wayland was only following Harvard's lead in demanding that every officer be in residence. Tristram Burges, at Brown, and Edward Everett, at Harvard, resigned for this reason.<sup>32</sup> Such drastic reforms naturally raised a hue and cry among those who were reformed. The community, which had been disgusted with conditions under President Messer, now doubted the wisdom of the selection of Way-

<sup>29</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 243-4.

<sup>30</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 28.

<sup>31</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, p. 232, note.

<sup>32</sup> Walter C. Bronson, *The History of Brown University, 1764-1914* (Providence, 1914), pp. 212-5; Morison, p. 234. Bronson devotes two chapters (pp. 204-316) to President Wayland's administration; they contain much biographical as well as historical material.



land, but the leading members of the corporation advised him to continue fearlessly in the course which he had commenced. He acknowledged his particular indebtedness for wise counsel and generous encouragement to Thomas P. Ives, "whose quiet opinion carried more weight than that of any ten men in Providence."<sup>33</sup> Thus strengthened, Wayland adopted a policy from which he did not deviate, never to answer an attack on his administration.

Matters of discipline thus disposed of, Wayland turned his whole attention to reforming the methods of teaching in accordance with the principles he had learned at Union from Dr. Nott. The following example of the recitation method then in general use is authentic, though it may well be exaggerated: The instructor sat with the textbook open before him, and as the student recited he moved his finger along the lines, keeping pace with the pupil. If the recitation outstripped the professor, he would look up—keeping his finger at the place—and say in a tone of mild reproof, "Not so fast, not *quite* so fast."

In Wayland's opinion, "To hear a scholar say a lesson, is not to educate him. He who is not able to leave his mark upon a pupil, never ought to have one." "Let us never forget that the business of an instructor begins where the office of a book ends. It is the action of mind upon mind, exciting, awakening, showing by example the power of reasoning and the scope of generalization, and rendering it impossible that the pupil should not think; this is the noble and the ennobling duty of an instructor."<sup>34</sup>

We need not here concern ourselves with the system of simplification, analysis, and review which Wayland intro-

<sup>33</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 208-9.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Wayland, *An Introductory Address, Delivered in Boston, before the Convention of Teachers, and other Friends of Education, assembled to form the American Institute of Instruction, August 19th, 1830* (Boston, 1830), pp. 13, 19. Wayland was elected first President of the Institute and held office until August 22, 1833.



duced at Brown, but we must not fail to notice that it attracted much favorable comment from students and teachers.<sup>35</sup> Justice Joseph Story, of the Supreme Court and the Harvard Law School, was wont to say "that he could distinguish a graduate from Brown University [during Wayland's presidency] by his power of seizing upon the essential points of a case and freeing it from all extraneous matters."<sup>36</sup>

In the arid waste of the curriculum there was one garden spot: "The loosely organized moral philosophy course, with its core of ethics and its smattering of logic and literary criticism, of political, economic, and psychological data [which] offered limitless opportunities to the ingenious teacher. He could turn it in many directions and make it serve as a vehicle for anything he wanted the seniors to know before turning them out into the world."<sup>37</sup> President Wayland took full advantage of the opportunity to teach the seniors his conception of ethics or moral philosophy. When he began to teach the course the accepted textbooks at Brown, as at most colleges, were the works of Dr. William Paley. Wayland found that he was frequently obliged to dissent from the principles expressed by the author because of their extreme utilitarianism. He made notes of these points of dissent which gradually grew into complete lectures, and after a few years he was surprised to find that the lectures "contained, by themselves, the elements of a different system from that of the textbook." He then gave up the works of Dr. Paley and for some time instructed "solely by lecture. The success of the attempt exceeded my expectations [he wrote], and encouraged me to hope, that the publication of what I had delivered to my classes, might, in some small degree, facilitate the study of moral science."<sup>38</sup> This is the

<sup>35</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 214, *et passim*.

<sup>36</sup> Chace, p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> George P. Schmidt, "Intellectual Crosscurrents in American Colleges," *American Historical Review*, vol. 42 (Oct., 1936), pp. 46-67, at 49.

<sup>38</sup> *The Elements of Moral Science* (Boston, 1835), preface to first edition, pp. 3-4.



origin of Wayland's *Elements of Moral Science*, the textbook in ethics which had the widest acceptance by America in the second generation of the 19th century. It quickly found a place in the curricula of both colleges and schools, which it retained long after the Civil War. Speaking before the Pennsylvania Historical Society, the Reverend George D. Boardman, Brown '52, asked this pertinent question:

When we remember what multitudes of youths he [Wayland] instructed during the nearly thirty years of his presidency, and how his textbooks have been scattered broadcast over the continent, and when we reflect how those principles of which he was so illustrious an expounder have been silently assimilated into the mental and moral structure of the nation, who can compute the number or the energy of those elemental forces of American society into which Dr. Wayland's thoughts and tuitions have been metamorphosed?<sup>39</sup>

*The Elements of Moral Science* is compounded of four main ingredients: first, the basic precepts of the Bible—"To love thy neighbor as thyself" and "Do unto others as you would they should do unto you"; second, the Protestant right of private judgment; third, the theory that the conscience is the faculty which controls men's actions in accordance with the moral law—"but little more than a development" of the ideas of Bishop Butler on this subject; and last, the doctrine that the powers of government are limited to those specifically delegated, as expressed by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence. Let us examine them in detail.

From the day when he "became a Christian"—to use his own words in describing his conversion and profession of faith—Francis Wayland adopted the moral precepts of the Bible as his guide to daily life. "He was accustomed to ask himself what the Lord Jesus Christ would have done in the same circumstances," wrote Kendall Brooks, '41, President of Kalamazoo College.<sup>40</sup> In the *Moral Science* he took it for

<sup>39</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 389.

<sup>40</sup> "Francis Wayland," *The Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 2, no. 1 (Jan., 1868), pp. 66-82, at 77; see also, *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 45, quoting letter from the Honorable Isaac Davis to Francis Wayland, Jr., Worcester, Nov. 24, 1865, "If Christ were on earth, and present here, would he attend this exhibition?"



granted "that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament contain a revelation from God to man, and that these books contain all that God has been pleased to reveal unto us by language; and, therefore, all . . . that is ultimate in morals, and that is, by its own authority, binding upon the conscience."<sup>41</sup> "The highest sanction of duty is found in the revealed word of God. The solid and immovable foundation of moral obligation [is] not *expediency*, not *utility* . . . but the *will of God*, as set forth in his revealed word."<sup>42</sup> "The ideas of revelation are not human, but divine ideas, the conceptions of the infinite God," Wayland wrote to Dr. L. Withington.<sup>43</sup>

His faith was founded on what he believed to be competent evidence and "in all the progress of science, he saw nothing to invalidate the evidence of a real revelation." Dr. Caswell, his close associate for twenty-eight years, stated Wayland's position thus:

To say that a miracle is *impossible*, is simply preposterous. To say a miracle is *incredible*, is a pure assumption. To say that God will not, for any reason, suspend, or change what we call the laws of nature, is a mere assertion, without proof. To say that God cannot answer prayer, implies a limitation of his almighty power. With Dr. Wayland, these objections . . . had no weight either logically or practically. They do not impair the evidence of revelation, or shorten the arm of the Almighty. The God of the Universe is the God of the Bible. True science and true religion will go on, hand in hand, mutual supports to each other until all knowledge, as we now understand it, shall vanish away before the resplendent light of an unveiled eternity. Such were Dr. Wayland's views.<sup>44</sup>

And these views generally were accepted in that day.

Truly representative of his age Wayland believed in the perfectibility of man and he "was always found . . . in the advance of the party of progress," but he had little faith in

<sup>41</sup> *Moral Science*, p. 139.

<sup>42</sup> Alexis Caswell, *A Sermon on the Christian Work of the Rev. Francis Wayland, D.D., President of Brown University* (Providence, 1868), p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> Under date of July 9, 1861, *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 125.

<sup>44</sup> Caswell, p. 11.



the continued progress of man unless strengthened by the practice of Christianity. For this reason he devoted a lifetime of labor to "spreading a knowledge of the Gospel, and bringing men in heart and in life under the sway of its principles."<sup>45</sup> Faith in the ameliorating effects of its influence caused Wayland frequently to make statements like this:

That the truths of the Bible have the power of awakening an intense moral feeling in man under every variety of character, learned or ignorant, civilized or savage; that they make bad men good; . . . that they teach men to love right, to hate wrong, and to seek each other's welfare . . . are facts, incontrovertible as the laws of philosophy, or the demonstrations of mathematics. Evidence in support of all this can be brought from every age in the history of man, since there has been a revelation from God on earth. We see the proof of it everywhere around us.<sup>46</sup>

Such sentiments were natural in the mouth of the leading Baptist of the day, an ardent advocate of foreign missions. Wayland, however, did not carry his Baptist tenets to extremes. He once said in the college Chapel:

In addressing you, young gentlemen, I am of no sect. Never, since I have been an instructor,—nay, I might, with truth, go farther,—have I uttered a word with the conscious intention of proselyting you to the denomination of which I am a member. . . . You have all your own religious preferences, as you are connected with the different persuasions of Protestant Christianity. We would have you enjoy these preferences to the uttermost; and in this institution you have from the beginning, enjoyed them to the uttermost, not as a favor, but as an inalienable right.<sup>47</sup>

This statement was in harmony with the catholic spirit of the Brown charter which excludes all sectarian tests and teachings. Likewise he was opposed to a Baptist version of the Bible.<sup>48</sup> Both "as a protestant and a Baptist," however, Wayland "was an uncompromising defender of the right of private judgment." This Lutheran principle he held to be

<sup>45</sup> Chace, pp. 40-1.

<sup>46</sup> Francis Wayland, "The Duties of an American Citizen," *Occasional Discourses* (Boston, 1833), p. 72.

<sup>47</sup> Francis Wayland, "The Church of Christ," *Sermons delivered in the chapel of Brown University* (Boston, 1849), p. 234.

<sup>48</sup> Bronson, p. 314, quoting an unpublished letter dated Jan. 18, 1858.



the fundamental and inalienable right of every Christian as it was indispensable to the growth of true religion. Thoroughly a Baptist principle, "It denies the authority of pope, prelate, priest or council, to dictate what any man shall believe."<sup>49</sup>

It is apparent that Dr. Wayland placed man's duty to God before everything; next followed duty to his fellow man. This latter he defined as the Law of Reciprocity which had as its corollary, the Law of Benevolence—the obligation to help those who have no claim on you. Following Bishop Butler—and acknowledging his indebtedness—Wayland made conscience man's guide to moral action. Man by his nature is entitled to pursue his own happiness, but only in such a way as not to violate the corresponding rights of his neighbor. In other words, the guide of life for every man should be the main precepts of the Bible, and particularly the precept, "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Wayland was fully aware that man is selfish and that some form of social contract is necessary to prevent the "universal war" which would ensue if he were permitted to indulge his self-love with impunity. Therefore he postulated a society, ordained by God, by which the rights of the individual that he had relinquished under the Law of Reciprocity may be guaranteed him by the combined power of the whole. "Every man turns to society as the umpire whenever he believes that his rights have been invaded by his neighbor. Society, on the other hand, assumes the office, pronounces the award, and pledges its whole power to carry it into execution."

"The various forms of civil magistracy are ordained" to accomplish these purposes: The Legislature enacts the laws, that is, it defines the rights of the individual; the Judiciary ascertains whether or not a law has been violated; the Ex-

<sup>49</sup> Caswell, p. 13.



ecutive carries into effect the decision of the Judiciary. "Here the great function of civil society ends. This is, I think, the view of the subject entertained by the authors of the Declaration of Independence" when they wrote that all men are endowed "with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to *secure these rights governments are instituted among men.*" Such then is the paramount object for which the magistracy is appointed of God."<sup>50</sup>

Thus Wayland welded the Law of Reciprocity with the Declaration of Independence and on the strength of this union he based his version of the American ideal. It found wide acceptance in his day and even now evokes nostalgic echoes.

I love simple manners, simple tastes, a simple government, which has very little to do, which leaves everything possible to be done by the individual, and which stimulates talent of every kind, not by patronage, but by giving talent free exercise, and leaving it to its own resources; a government of which the constitution may remain firm as adamant, while the men who administer it may be changed every year by the popular will. This is the country for me, and may it be the country for my children; and may it please God that such a country long may be the United States of America.<sup>51</sup>

Limitations of space forbid a full expansion of the corollaries of the Law of Reciprocity; some of them, however, must be noted. Wayland had a legal mind and when he stated that government was only the agent of society he was conscious of all the strict legal limitations of agency. Any expansion by the government of the limited powers delegated to it justifies the citizens in refusing to support the agent. *The Duty of Obedience to the Civil Magistrate*, three discourses delivered at the time of the Mexican War, preach the doctrine that the citizen need not support government

<sup>50</sup> Francis Wayland, *The Duty of Obedience to the Civil Magistrate* (Boston, 1847), pp. 9-10; *Moral Science*, p. 346.

<sup>51</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, pp. 23-4.



when it makes aggressive war. And the precepts of the Gospel forbid any war except in self-defense. *The Elements of Political Economy*, published in 1837, holds that a protective tariff is an infringement of the rights of the many for the benefit of the few, and thus is a violation of the Law of Reciprocity. Application of this principle to freedom of worship and of speech is too obvious to mention.

In the field of education the path leads straight to universal education of a practical nature in accordance with an elective system. President Wayland voiced his matured educational creed in an address significantly entitled *The Education demanded by the People of the United States*, delivered in 1854 at the height of his career.

The practice of every art depends for success on a knowledge of some social or physical law. Knowledge, to every intelligent man, is emphatically power. If he fail in any art, he knows that it must have been because he has violated some law; if he succeed, it must be because he has obeyed it. To such a community [as the United States], knowledge is then a matter of imperative necessity. This is the very element of success. Without it, unless by accident, man must labor in vain, and consume his capital without remuneration. Hence, it may readily be believed that such a people would eagerly desire that physical [practical] knowledge, on which all success in the useful arts depends, as well as that other spiritual knowledge which the human mind instinctively craves, as soon as its energies are aroused, and the true and the beautiful are brought within its field of vision.<sup>62</sup>

Here speaks the Wayland who devoted his whole secular life to making education available to the ordinary American citizen, the "common man," of whom the social historians write. Nearly a quarter century before he had written:

The paramount duty of an American citizen is, to put in requisition every possible means for elevating universally the intellectual and moral character of our people. . . .

The object at which we aim will be attained, when every man is familiarly acquainted with what are now considered the ordinary branches of an English education. The intellectual stores of one language

<sup>62</sup> Francis Wayland, *The Education demanded by the People of the U. States. A Discourse delivered at Union College, Schenectady, July 25, 1854, on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presidency of Eliphalet Nott, D.D., LL.D.* (Boston, 1855), pp. 23-4.



are then open before him. . . . A man who cannot read, let us always remember, is a being not contemplated by the genius of our constitution. Where the right of suffrage is extended to all, he is certainly a dangerous member of the community who has not qualified himself to exercise it.<sup>53</sup>

In 1825 when Wayland expressed himself for universal education there were few tax supported public schools. The curriculum pursued in most American colleges at that time, and in general until the middle of the 19th century was the same that Henry Dunster, first President of Harvard (1640-54), had brought over from Cambridge University. It consisted of four chief divisions: the classics (the most important); rhetoric and belles lettres; mathematics and natural philosophy (physics); and metaphysics and ethics.<sup>54</sup> But a new day was about to dawn. The stirrings which brought into being Henry Clay's American System were in the air. Protests against the treadmill of the college recitation system grew louder and more widespread; more people agreed with Andrew D. White that "gerund-grinding" was not education.<sup>55</sup> There were signs of another American Revolution, this time in the field of education.

Proponents of change were not centered in one place. George Ticknor, inspired by his experiences at the University of Göttingen in Germany, had induced President Kirkland to permit the student in some classes at Harvard to progress according to his ability; Thomas Jefferson's scheme for the organization of the University of Virginia in 1825 called for the establishment of eight separate schools and permitted the student to enroll in the school for which he was best suited; at Amherst and the University of Vermont the old compulsory curriculum was modified.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> "The Duties of an American Citizen," p. 70.

<sup>54</sup> George P. Schmidt, *loc. cit.*, p. 47, and *The Old Time College President* (New York, 1930), pp. 95-7. See also, Louis F. Snow, *The College Curriculum in the United States* (New York, 1907), *passim*.

<sup>55</sup> *Autobiography* (New York, 1905), vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>56</sup> Schmidt, *loc. cit.*, pp. 51-3; see also, R. Freeman Butts, *The College Charts its Course* (New York, 1939), pp. 88-108.



Wayland was pastor at the First Baptist Church in Boston during the discussion of the Harvard reforms of 1824 and subsequently displayed a familiarity with Ticknor's pamphlet.<sup>57</sup> There is little doubt that he was aware of Dr. Nott's plans to institute a parallel course substituting modern languages for the classics. President Angell was unable to say whether the failure to imitate the University of Virginia was "in any degree owing to the somewhat widespread distrust of Mr. Jefferson as a theorist in science and education, or to the want of ample means required to establish and maintain an institution on his plan."<sup>58</sup>

By 1828 the rumblings of discontent with the established system had become pronounced and so many colleges were proposing changes that the conservatives took notice. The Yale faculty made an investigation and submitted its conclusion in a document known as the *Yale Report of 1828*.<sup>59</sup> Written by President Day the *Report* sets forth the opinion of the faculty that proper college instruction should emphasize the "intellectual ability" of the student rather than the amount of knowledge he acquires. The Yale curriculum, President Day asserted, embodies all the studies which are best suited to give a student a liberal education to prepare him for any sort of life work.

Our prescribed course contains those subjects only which ought to be understood, as we think, by every one who aims at a thorough education. They are not the peculiarities of any profession or art. These are to be learned in the professional and practical schools. But the principles of science are the common foundations of all high intellectual attainments . . . so in a college, all should be instructed in those branches of knowledge, of which no one destined to the higher walks of life ought to be ignorant. What subject which is now studied here, could be set aside, without evidently marring the system?

<sup>57</sup> *Report to the Corporation of Brown University on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education, Read March 28, 1850* (Providence, 1850), p. 18.

<sup>58</sup> James Burrill Angell, '49, "College and University," *Founders Day, July 1, 1899, Selected Addresses* (New York, 1912), p. 131.

<sup>59</sup> "Original Papers in Relation to a Course of Liberal Education," *American Journal of Science and Arts*, vol. 15 (Jan., 1829), pp. 297-351; Cf. Butts, pp. 118-28.



The *Report* admits that the public is right in demanding that every class of society be provided with an education appropriate to its status. That, however, is not the function of the college but of academies, schools and technical institutions. And in obvious rebuttal of the proposals by other colleges to offer practical courses as a means to increase the number of students, President Day maintained that it is to the best interest of a college, both present and future, to keep its standards high and its degree respected.

The doctrine of mental discipline stated by the *Yale Report* in such unequivocal terms had tremendous influence on the course of American higher education. So late as 1854 Frederick A. P. Barnard, then Professor of Science at the University of Alabama, reported to the trustees for a committee of the faculty:

The introduction of studies on the ground of their practical utility is, pro tanto, subversive of the college. It is not the office of the college to make planters, mechanics, lawyers, physicians, or divines. It has nothing directly to do with the uses of knowledge. Its business is with minds, and it employs science only as an instrument for the improvement and perfection of mind. With it, the habit of sound thinking is more than a thousand thoughts.<sup>60</sup>

And later he made a pronouncement "that education, in its widest sense, signifies the development, discipline, and cultivation of all the powers and faculties of man, physical, mental, and moral." These principles are "too well established to leave room for further controversy."<sup>61</sup>

The same spirit of conservatism prevailed in the Faculty and Corporation of Brown. Wayland wrote in his *Reminiscences* that at the beginning of his work as President he had proposed to adapt the course of instruction to

<sup>60</sup> [F. A. P. Barnard and Jno. W. Pratt], *Report on a Proposition to Modify the Plan of Instruction in the University of Alabama, made to the Faculty of the University. Read before the Faculty, Sept. 21, and before the Board of Trustees, Sept. 26, 1854* (New York, 1855), p. 55.

<sup>61</sup> F. A. P. Barnard, *Improvements practicable in American colleges*. . . (Hartford, 1856), p. 8.



the wants of the whole community. . . . If education is good for one class of the community, it is good for all classes. Not that the same studies are to be pursued by all, but that each one should have the opportunity of pursuing such studies as will be of the greatest advantage to him in the course of life which he has chosen.

This statement smacks of the last phase of Wayland's educational theory, when he had committed himself to an elective system. A rhetorical question asked in the Report of the Committee on Public Schools of Providence, written by Chairman Wayland in April, 1828, supports the above quotation. He asks:

Is not education a commodity, which all classes of the community want. Why then should we not furnish it of such quality that all may enjoy it together. By furnishing a valuable course of Public Instruction, the rich will enjoy its advantages and surely it cannot injure the middling classes and the poor.<sup>62</sup>

There is no mistaking the democratic tone of this statement; equality of opportunity was fundamental in Wayland's educational theory. It should be noted, however, that the passage quoted from the School Report makes no mention of vocational training or the pursuit of "such studies as will be of the greatest advantage to him [the student] in the course of life which he has chosen." This remark in the *Reminiscences* is due, no doubt, to hindsight. Newly elected President Wayland was unable to put his ideas into practice; both faculty and corporation considered them visionary and beyond the limited means at the disposal of the college. His chance did not come until the reorganization in 1850. Prevented from making drastic changes in the curriculum President Wayland concentrated on improvements in teaching. A member of the senior class in Wayland's first year as President, remarked:

The new system . . . was the exact antipode of that which it displaced. It was in harmony with the spirit of the age, yet sufficiently original to be called "Wayland's."

<sup>62</sup> *Report of the Committee on Public Schools* (Providence, April 22, 1828), p. 4.



President Wayland also turned his energies to the development of the Library which "was kept in one of the projection rooms of University Hall, and was almost a *terra incognita* to many of the students."<sup>63</sup> At the Sesqui-Centennial in 1914, the Honorable Charles E. Hughes, '81, quotes him as saying that the library consisted of books, "old, few and miscellaneous—such, in general, as had been gleaned by solicitation from private libraries, where they were considered as of no value."<sup>64</sup> A meeting of the friends of Brown was called in the summer of 1832 for the purpose of obtaining a permanent fund for the library and subscriptions for the purchase of chemical and philosophical (physics) apparatus. Wayland made an appeal for the library as the one means of advancing science and knowledge in the United States.

The most valuable books with which we enrich our libraries could not have been written here, because the knowledge which they embody could not have been found in America.

A real library takes years to accumulate, he added, and can be procured only by public munificence. Harvard is appropriating \$5,000 per year to increase her library, "already the most valuable . . . possessed by any university in the United States." Yale is raising \$100,000 for these and similar purposes. "Is it not time that we followed such noble examples, and, as citizens of the Republic of Letters, contributed our portion towards the intellectual advancement of our country?"<sup>65</sup> Nicholas Brown led the list with a contribution of \$10,000; ninety-eight others swelled the total to \$19,438.00, which was put at interest until the principal sum amounted to \$25,000. Wayland himself was among the large subscribers, contributing \$200, thus beginning a practice

<sup>63</sup> Reminiscences of Charles Thurber, '27, *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 223-4.

<sup>64</sup> *The Sesqui-Centennial of Brown University, 1764-1914* (Providence, 1915), p. 181.

<sup>65</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 317-8.



which he continued through life.<sup>66</sup> With the erection of Manning Hall by Nicholas Brown, at his own expense, Wayland's dream of a suitable library building came true. It was dedicated with appropriate ceremonies on February 4, 1835.<sup>67</sup>

At this point notice should be taken of the contribution of Francis Wayland to the cause of general education by furthering the free public library system of Massachusetts.<sup>68</sup> On Commencement Day, 1847, in conversation with Edward Mellen, '23, trustee (1842-75) and later Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, President Wayland expressed the desire to help the inhabitants of the Town of Wayland to acquire a library and proposed to give the sum of \$500 for the purpose. Judge Mellen heartily approved and suggested that the gift be conditioned on a like sum being raised by the people of the town. They quickly subscribed \$554. At a town meeting, March 6, 1848, President Wayland was disclosed as the benefactor and "it was voted unanimously (by rising with uncovered heads,) that the thanks of the town be presented to the Rev. Dr. Wayland, for his generous donation."<sup>69</sup>

The question then arose: "Can a Town in its municipal capacity grant money for a Town Library?" There was no question that the town could hold the sum of \$1054 "as any other gift or bequest . . . but serious doubts were entertained about the right of a town to tax its inhabitants for a Public Library, or for anything pertaining to a Library."

<sup>66</sup> Reuben A. Guild, *History of Brown University* (Providence, 1867), pp. 83-7.

<sup>67</sup> Francis Wayland, *A Discourse, Delivered at the Dedication of Manning Hall . . . February 4, 1835* (Boston, 1835).

<sup>68</sup> Jared M. Heard, '53, *Origin of the Free Public Library System of Massachusetts* (Clinton, 1860), *passim*.

<sup>69</sup> The town was once known as East Sudbury but Wayland's sons wrote: "The Town of Wayland . . . had received its name in honor of the president of Brown University." *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 71.; see also: "Dr. Wayland gave the town a library so they thought they would call it Wayland." Edward E. Hale, Jr., *The Life and Letters of Edward Everett Hale* (Boston, 1917), vol. 2, p. 270.



Judge Mellen was fully of the opinion that no such right existed, and the Honorable Samuel Hoar of Concord agreed. The difficulty was surmounted by an optional assessment on each taxpayer for the benefit of the library. The first books were purchased June 28, the first deliveries to readers were made August 7, and a catalogue was printed September 12, 1850. On the strength of this record the Town of Wayland claims the first Free Public Library established in the State. To provide a permanent solution to the problem of maintenance the Reverend John B. Wright, member of the Massachusetts General Court from Wayland, introduced an act to authorize cities and towns "to establish and maintain public libraries" from tax funds. It was approved by Governor George S. Boutwell, May 24, 1851.

A "Library Celebration" took place at Wayland, August 26, 1851. Witnessing old and young crowding into the church where the celebration was held, President Wayland remarked to Judge Mellen:

This gives me a higher idea of New England character than any thing I have before witnessed. Your inhabitants have assembled without distinction of age or sex, to celebrate, with joyful festivities, not any great victory, not any great political event, *but the founding of a library.*

Wayland had resigned the Professorship of Natural Philosophy and Mathematics at Union College to accept the presidency of Brown. But his interest in natural science continued and shortly after he took office a committee of the corporation was appointed at his request to purchase suitable instruments. Soon a set of apparatus costing \$3,000 was presented by Nicholas Brown and Thomas P. Ives. When the need for expansion again arose in 1839 Nicholas Brown offered a lot on George street and \$3,000 to start a fund to erect a building for the Department of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Minerology and Natural History. Other friends of the college soon raised the balance of



\$8,250, and Rhode Island Hall was dedicated, September 4, 1840.

Nicholas Brown also built a mansion for the president and presented the college with several lots. Altogether his gifts to the university totaled nearly \$159,000. If his contribution to the Providence Athenaeum and his bequest to Butler Hospital, both projects in which Wayland was deeply interested, are included, his benefactions probably exceeded \$211,500, no mean sum for those days. But President Wayland failed to obtain from his friend any addition to the productive funds of Brown. This omission prevented any immediate expansion of the curriculum and later arose to bedevil him when the college enrollment began to fall off in 1837.

Emotional problems complicated his life during this period. On April 3, 1834, Lucy Lincoln Wayland, whom he had married at Boston, November 21, 1825, died, leaving him with two small boys, Francis and Heman Lincoln. And so it was a relief to take up the exacting task of preparing the manuscript of *The Elements of Moral Science*, published May 14, 1835. We have the word of Professor Chace that it was immediately adopted by a large number of colleges, academies and high schools. By 1867 the circulation had reached 95,000 copies, and 42,000 of an abridgment for younger pupils were sold. Many of these were used again and again, spreading Wayland's ethics far and wide. It was republished in England and Scotland and translated into Hawaiian, modern Greek, Armenian, Nestorian (Syrian), and Sgaru Karen, a dialect of southern Burma.<sup>70</sup>

The present-day teacher will find it difficult to understand the great success of this work. It is labored and repetitious; the author, quite in the 19th century manner, makes many dogmatic statements citing no authority. Yet he had his

<sup>70</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 1, pp. 381-7.



reasons for this method and the clear statement of his purpose justifies a lengthy quotation from the Preface to the first edition. It grew out of lectures to his classes, as we have noted, and "from these circumstances the work . . . derived its character."

Being designed for the purposes of instruction, its aim is, to be simple, clear, and purely didactic. I have rarely gone into extended discussion, but have contented myself with the attempt to state the moral law, and the reason of it, in as few and as comprehensive terms as possible. The illustration of the principles, and the application of them to cases in ordinary life, I have generally left to the instructor, or to the student himself.

In the course of the work, I have quoted but few authorities, as, in preparing it, I have referred to but few books. I make this remark in no manner for the sake of laying claim to originality, but to avoid the imputation of using the labors of others without acknowledgment. When I commenced the undertaking, I attempted to read extensively, but soon found it so difficult to arrive at any definite results, in this manner, that the necessities of my situation obliged me to rely upon my own reflection.<sup>71</sup>

Wayland relied on the common sense of his "innate inborn gumption"<sup>72</sup> and sailed "by his own compass."<sup>73</sup> "In the leading tenets of his intellectual philosophy he conforms most nearly to the doctrines of [Dugald] Stewart and [Thomas] Reid."<sup>74</sup> In this respect also Wayland was representative, for the works of these leaders of the "Common Sense" school of philosophy were prescribed in nearly every college catalogue of the day.

President Wayland identified himself with the college: "That was always his first interest. To that everything else was subordinate." But "there was hardly an association in the country, for educational, philanthropic or religious objects, of which he was not a member and which did not look to him for advocacy, counsel and support."<sup>75</sup>

<sup>71</sup> *Moral Science*, Preface to first edition, pp. 4-5.

<sup>72</sup> James O. Murray, '50, *Francis Wayland* (New York, 1891), p. 190.

<sup>73</sup> *Memoir*, vol. I, p. 117.

<sup>74</sup> Chace, p. 42.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-7.



Space will permit a listing only of the many outside activities in which he was engaged. Immediately after assuming office he had been appointed chairman of a committee on the Public Schools of Providence. Its Report, to which reference has already been made, was accepted and put into effect. This was only the first of many efforts to improve education in Rhode Island; "the common school, the high school, and the academy, all found in him a sympathizing friend, a skillful adviser, and a most efficient helper."<sup>76</sup> Nor did he confine his interest to intrastate activities. He was one of the founders and first president of the American Institute of Instruction, delivering the Introductory Address, August 19, 1830, at Boston, and in 1837, he was a member of the Board of Visitors at West Point, the only institution of instruction which met his standards of practical training.

With a single exception Wayland had good cause to feel satisfied at the end of his first thirteen years as President. Discipline at the University was excellent; the younger men on the faculty had proved their worth; the teaching brought renown to the college. He had published extensively and successfully. In his own city of Providence he was a recognized leader; throughout the country he was well known as an educator, preacher and humanitarian; and he was happily married and in prosperous circumstances. His one cause for dissatisfaction was the financial condition of the college. Since 1836-37, attendance had been dropping off while expenses remained the same. Wayland was too shrewd and too honest to fail to see that something was radically wrong. His friends persuaded him to follow a suggestion—often previously made—that he take a leave of absence, with the idea of combining a vacation and a study of European insti-

<sup>76</sup> [Henry Barnard], Barnard's *American Journal of Education*, vol. 13 (Dec., 1863), pp. 771-800, at 786.



tutions of learning. He sailed for England in the fall of 1840, and returned in April, 1841.

As a vacation the journey was not a success; for the first time in his life he was in a strange land and he could not speak the language. He thought that France was a country without a God, and that all Frenchmen had a disposition to lying and dishonesty. His journal is filled with longings for home:

Every step and every moment impress me more strongly with the fact that Americans know not their own mercies. . . . The blessings of true religion, of equal rights, of being each one allowed to take care of himself, of not being over-governed,—all throng upon an American abroad with a depth of meaning of which at home he knew nothing.

He could not be persuaded to give time to sightseeing. "All the talk about mental improvement is the merest fudge. Life is too short to justify the waste of such a fraction of it. If I live to return, I shall set my face against the practice as wicked." The scientific utility of the Jardin des Plantes impressed him, as it did Emerson, but he thought the money sunk in Versailles would have "constructed thirteen canals, each as expensive as the Erie Canal, and would before this have doubled or trebled the wealth of France."

His French visit was not a total loss. He was obliged to admit that in Paris are "books, libraries, lecturers, all the means for learning, and here is learning itself. We have neither books, libraries, nor learning. But [he wrote with characteristic intransigence] we have institutions which develop mind, which unfold and invigorate the faculties, and give action and energy to whatever knowledge we possess. This, at least in some degree, counterbalances the defect in learning. An American mind of the same native strength is, I apprehend, a match for a European."<sup>77</sup>

The English he found congenial. He was well received by high and low, yet he did not feel at home except in private

<sup>77</sup>*Memoir*, vol. 2, pp. 16-26.



houses. His true opinion is revealed in his journal for January 26, 1841, after witnessing Queen Victoria open Parliament: "I know not how it is, but all I see renders me more doggedly a Democrat and a Puritan." A man's sayings often reveal his character, and Wayland's democratic instincts are shown in his comment on the Baptists: "We are a *middling-interest* people, and there is no better interest."<sup>78</sup> His practical mind is displayed in the oft repeated, "I must say I go for the useful."<sup>79</sup> Finally there is his watchword: "I go for the human race,"<sup>80</sup> a brief way to say that "The great study, at present, of every thoughtful man is the social improvement of the human race."<sup>81</sup> It is in the light of these democratic, practical and humanitarian principles that his reaction to English educational institutions must be judged.

In due course Wayland visited the Universities of London, Cambridge, Edinburgh, Glasgow, and Oxford. Of the last he wrote that its buildings were magnificent, its colleges "palaces," its officers "thorough-bred gentlemen, highly intelligent, and, I presume, finely educated. It is a place where you would love to dwell."

But when one reflects on the immense wealth of its establishment, and remembers that this was designed to promote the prosecution of science and the advancement of learning, and not for the cultivation of luxurious ease; when one remembers that it was for the education of the people of England, and not a part of them, and that it is now used for the good of a part, and is the avenue to all social and professional standing, I cannot think of it with unmixed respect. It seems to me a monstrous perversion. I do not speak of the present incumbents . . . but of the system. . . . In the main it is the same as Cambridge, though in detail it is more restrictive, and is more inclined to theology.

The teaching at both Universities seemed to him to be "cultivating narrowness rather than expansiveness of mind,

<sup>78</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 167.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 90 n.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 388.



and to be conferring rather a fragment of education than an enlarged view of human knowledge."<sup>82</sup>

Soon after his return from England, President Wayland began to agitate for reform at Brown. President Angell, a member of the Brown faculty in 1850, told Professor Bronson in a personal interview that he attributed Wayland's discontent with the old system to his study of the universities of Great Britain.<sup>83</sup> James O. Murray, '50, an instructor, wrote:

He kept steadily before him the nature of republican institutions, and wrought out all his plans of education on the principle that, whatever system prevailed in the Old World, American education must consult American institutions. The interest of both are inseparably intertwined.<sup>84</sup>

This opinion is in accord with President Wayland's first report to the Corporation following his return. He expressed his "deliberate opinion that the system of the New England colleges is not only better adapted to meet the wants of our country but is also more perfect in itself than either that of England or Scotland." It combines the recitation with the lecture system and unites the officers "more perfectly in the labor of discipline and government as well as of scientific instruction. . . . What we need, therefore, is not so much a change of system as a more perfect development of the system which we have adopted." In optimistic mood he continues: "There is everything to encourage the friends of education in this country. Though much, very much, remains to be done, let us be cheered by the recollection that there are no inveterate prejudices to be encountered, and no system of vested rights and unchangeable uses to render progress impracticable." With the obvious intent of influencing his trustees he writes:

<sup>82</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 41.

<sup>83</sup> Bronson, p. 274.

<sup>84</sup> Murray, p. 185.



The destinies of the cause of education are in our own hands and not in the hands of those who have gone before us. The spirit of the country is warmly enlisted in favor of improvement in education and nowhere has the disposition been more decidedly or more honorably manifested than in our city.<sup>85</sup>

A committee of the Corporation was appointed to consider what changes, if any, might be made with advantage. It reported

that an effort must soon be made by the more advanced American colleges to adapt their courses to the different capacities and wants of students, giving to each officer the opportunity to carry his course of instruction to as great a degree of perfection as he is able, fixing certain acquisitions as necessary to graduation, but making such arrangements as will enable those not candidates for a degree to obtain in the various departments of knowledge such instruction as may qualify them for the occupations for which they were designed.

A roundabout way of saying the committee favored an elective system and vocational training: but it took no action! In his Report for 1842 President Wayland again returned to the charge. He asked that the schedules be so arranged that every student have time and facilities for the study of each subject and inquired whether it is not necessary to reduce the number of required subjects or to lengthen the term of residence in order to bring this about. Again the committee failed to meet the issue.

Wayland was disappointed with the frustration of his efforts to make improvements at Brown. In the hope that an appeal to a wider audience might influence his trustees he assembled his opinions in a pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System in the United States*, which was published in Boston in 1842. It was a controversial document, the merits of which are still in dispute. President Angell wrote:

But it was, so far as I know, to that vigorous and inspiring teacher, President Wayland, of Brown University, that we owe the earliest volume on the subject of American collegiate education. . . . He occupied himself

<sup>85</sup> "President's Report, September 1, 1841," MS., Brown University Archives.



more with exposing the defects in our system than in suggesting remedies for the evils. But the first step toward finding the remedy is a clear perception of the evil.<sup>86</sup>

Elbridge Smith, president of the American Institute of Instruction, was of the opinion that the pamphlet was "received with the respect due to the author, but not with the attention that was due to the subject."

During the twenty-five years that have passed since the publication of that volume [he wrote in 1867], there has been much thoughtful discussion, and much loose talk upon the subject.

But I am much in error if it is not by far the most thorough examination of the whole ground which has yet been made. He labored under the disadvantage of being just twenty-five years in advance of his generation, and his book was received with a coldness which, I doubt not, disappointed him.<sup>87</sup>

Professor S. E. Morison, on the other hand, describes it as "a tract probably productive of more mischief than any other in the history of American education. . . ." He has confused *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System*, published in 1842 with *Report to the Corporation of Brown University, on Changes in the System of Collegiate Education, Read March 28, 1850*. It is the latter which expressed

President Wayland's dangerously attractive formula, that "every student might study what he chose, all that he chose, and nothing but what he chose," in college. What most Americans wanted then of higher education, and want now, is a limited vocational training. For the last eighty years the universities of the United States have had to contend against that very thing; and many of the state universities have succumbed to it, as even a cursory inspection of their catalogues shows. . . . The demand was irresistible; in some form or other it had to be met. Eliot's greatest service to the country was to leap on the back of this wild mustang which Wayland had branded, and to break it into the civilized if somewhat jittery paces of the Harvard elective system. He managed to give the public a part of what it wanted, without completely sacrificing Thomas Jefferson's ideal of training an intellectual aristocracy to serve a political democracy.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Angell, p. 133.

<sup>87</sup> Elbridge Smith, *The Founders of the Institute and Its First President, an Address before the American Institute of Instruction* (Boston, 1867), p. 68.

<sup>88</sup> Morison, pp. 286-8.



The financial plight of Brown was a compelling reason for reform. Since 1836-37 the enrollment had been falling off, with a consequent decline in revenue. The endowment of \$31,000 produced but a tiny income. This unfortunate position determined Wayland to investigate the condition of other colleges; the results he embodied in *Thoughts, etc.*, which may be briefly summarized as follows:

There is a real desire on the part of the people for a higher education; but the form in which it is offered is not satisfactory; experience shows that the public will not pursue a college course "unless we offer it vastly below cost, if we do not give it away altogether." In England, university graduates of distinction are immediately recruited at the bar, in the church and in Parliament, and thus become a part of the British social system. In the United States there is no such stimulus to a college education.

American colleges are essentially the same as in colonial days; large boarding schools, with obligatory residence, and a compulsory curriculum. But since the Cambridge University system was established at Harvard there has been an expansion in the classical studies and in the 19th century many new subjects have been added, including Chemistry, Geology, Political Economy, Intellectual Philosophy, Rhetoric and Physiology. It is safe to say that the number of subjects to be taught has trebled, but the length of the course remains the same. The college must choose: either countenance superficiality in everything; or, accept contraction of the number of subjects; or, extend college education over a longer period of time—which last the American public is unwilling to accept. [p. 110]. In short, the present curriculum fails in two respects: over-crowding has made the college course less desirable even for those seeking to enter the professions; and the opportunity is denied a large class, the sons of merchants, manufacturers and mechanics, to obtain the education which their parents are willing to bestow.

Wayland divided the proposals for reform into two parts: the course preparatory to a profession should be generous and thorough, giving the student ample time to learn "how to study and how to master a subject" (p. 109), and secondly, he would provide "that the means of education in the other branches, [*i.e.*, practical training] may be open to all who choose to avail themselves of them" (p. 155). There should be lectures to which men of all classes may resort, a simple ticket admitting anyone and everyone to all



privileges. Let the college, he exhorted, "be the grand center of intelligence to all classes and conditions of men diffusing among all the light of every kind of knowledge. . . . Besides being a preparatory school to the professions, be a Lowell Institute to the region in which it is placed " (p.156). Professors in college should deliver lectures which would be attractive to the whole community. These would open a wide and interesting field of endeavor to the teacher and enlist the sympathies of the public in favor of the college (p. 144). In passing it may be noted that Ticknor had proposed that Harvard offer a similar system of lectures open to the general public.

It is frequently said that this is a republic [Wayland wrote], here we are all equal, the avenues to distinction are, and of right ought to be, open to all; every man whether poor or rich, of whatever occupation, should have the opportunity of improving himself to the utmost; this is demanded by the nature of our institutions, and it is important to success in the arts as well as necessary to the development of the universal mind. . . . To all this I fully agree. It is the expression of my long cherished sentiments (pp. 139-40).

The annual reports of the President from 1843 to 1849 reveal that he was making no progress towards his goal of improved education. Each is more perfunctory in form and less meticulous in detail, as if he were tired of the unsuccessful struggle. The recurring topics are: Loss of attendance, twenty to twenty-five per cent from 1835 to 1849; and continuing pressure by the faculty for increased earnings from salaries or fees. Ever present is the consciousness of a demand for a program of general education better adapted to the needs of the expanding country. There is no doubt that President Wayland was discouraged and he showed it so far as a man of his temperament ever lets himself get down. The choice was clear, either he must have his own way, or resign. He chose to resign. "The effect was electrical," wrote Bronson. "The Corporation at once expressed a unanimous wish that he would withdraw his resignation." He consented



on the understanding that the matter be referred to a committee of eleven, of which he was to be chairman, to investigate and report. After the Report had been read to the trustees, on March 28, 1850, and before it was printed, Dr. Wayland and Zachariah Allen made a flying visit to the University of Virginia to see in operation the system with which they had familiarized themselves on paper.

All previous writers—including Wayland's sons and Professor Bronson—have been obliged to speculate how much influence the system at the University of Virginia had on President Wayland's plan of reorganization at Brown.<sup>89</sup> It is now possible to show a direct connection between the two. A letter from Henry Rogers to his brother William, then Chairman of the Faculty at Virginia, sheds light on this previously obscure point.

Boston, Dec. 22, 1849

I had the pleasure of making a few very agreeable acquaintances when in Providence, among whom I deem Dr. Wayland a valuable accession to my list. I stayed this time, as before, with Zachariah Allen, a very enlightened manufacturer and a trustee of Brown University. Dr. W. dined with me the first day, and next day (yesterday), I dined at his house with Professor Caswell. Wayland is intent upon some valuable and important collegiate reforms, and his views are shared by Allen and a majority of the trustees. They contemplate an entire reorganization of their college introducing much more scientific and practical instruction, less Greek, etc., and adopting some of your system. Wayland is tired of the old monastic system, and is wishing to see the colleges more like our ideal School of Arts, if they cannot be true universities. I have nowhere found a more enlightened and independent thinker than Wayland. He has great native strength which has enabled him to get himself free from many early trammels. You would be greatly interested in his views.

Wayland much wishes a copy of your exposition of the system, etc., at the University, *Memorial to the Legislature*, and any documents or notes of your own having a bearing on the subject. He has had a copy and lent it to some of his trustees, and it may not suffice for his wants just now . . . send him another.

On Thursday, April 18, 1850, W. D. Rogers wrote his brother Henry:

<sup>89</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, pp. 92-3; Bronson, pp. 272-4.



Dr. Wayland and Mr. Allen arrived on Tuesday. . . . Dr. Wayland attended all the morning lectures on Wednesday as did Mr. Allen also, and both expressed themselves as greatly pleased with our system. They appear quite determined to adopt our more liberal features in their new scheme. . . . On the whole I am satisfied that our guests have carried away with them much encouragement for their plan of reform, as well as valuable guides in conducting them. . . .<sup>90</sup>

In a previously unpublished letter President Wayland wrote to his uncle, the Reverend Daniel S. Wayland in England:

I was obliged to pass through Washington on my way from Virginia where I had gone to visit the only University in this country at all similar to our proposed plan.<sup>91</sup>

Wayland here privately admits an obligation to the University of Virginia. But he failed to make public acknowledgment, an omission which for many years vastly annoyed the Virginia authorities. The *Jefferson Monument Magazine* said:

It is gratifying to have our opinion in favor of our own system thus corroborated by the decision of Dr. Wayland, it is mortifying to our pride to find that not even the slightest allusion is made to the fact that such an institution as the University of Virginia exists.<sup>92</sup>

It has long been known that Dr. Wayland was familiar with the unsuccessful attempt to introduce the elective system at Harvard; that he was in close touch with the development of a parallel course at his *alma mater*, Union College. It is now clear, to the satisfaction of the writer at least, that he also was well informed about the system at the University of Virginia.

President Wayland's Report to the Corporation, read March 28, 1850, proposed such revolutionary changes in

<sup>90</sup>"Robert and I had a great deal of pleasant talk with both gentlemen, especially with Dr. Wayland, and were charmed by his liberal and expansive spirit, as well as his remarkable clearness of head."—[Emma S. Rogers], *Life and Letters of William Barton Rogers Edited by His Wife* (Boston and New York, 1896), vol. 1., pp. 311-4.

<sup>91</sup>Francis Wayland, Letter, August 19, 1850, to the Reverend Daniel S. Wayland, Bassingham Rectory, Newark on Trent, England. Wayland Papers.

<sup>92</sup>Philip A. Bruce, *History of the University of Virginia* (New York and Richmond, 1929), vol. 3, pp. 253-5; see also, Professor James B. Minor, "The University of Virginia," *Old Dominion Magazine*, vol. 4, part 4 (June 15, 1870), pp. 326-30.



higher education that it deserves consideration in detail. He began by reverting to the scholastic argument he had advanced for the first time in 1842, *viz*, that the public was requiring an impossibility of the colleges by compelling them to teach so many branches in a four-year period (pp.13-6). The student is overloaded with subjects and so can do justice to none; the teacher has no incentive to extend himself to teach more subjects or to be more thorough (pp. 17-19).

The President also advanced an argument new in the history of education—a financial reason for reform. The movement of American civilization is in the direction of the useful arts; the present inducements to enter the learned professions are less than formerly whereas the attractions of the active professions are vastly greater because the most coveted positions await the merchant and the manufacturer. Even the number who consider a collegiate education an indispensable requisite to the learned professions has been decreasing (p. 21).

For these reasons the colleges have found it increasingly difficult to support themselves (p. 22). Two choices were open to them: to adapt the article produced to the wants of the community by extending their advantages, not to *one class* merely, but to *every class* which needed a scientific or liberal education; the other course was to appeal to the charity of the public to provide the funds necessary to sustain the present system. The latter was adopted, and the noble response of New England made it possible to reduce the fees of tuition even below cost. But yet the college system did not accomplish its purpose of a widespread education.

Referring to the situation at Brown, President Wayland reported that the amount of invested funds was \$31,000 when he became president in 1827, and remains the same at the present day. The college has not for more than forty



years received a dollar, either from public or private benevolence which could be appropriated to the support of the officers of instruction or a dollar which could be applied to reducing the price of tuition (pp. 43-4).

The corporation has sought to attract students by the literary advantages offered rather than by gratuitous tuition; chief among these is a working library of 24,000 volumes which is second to none in New England (pp. 44-6). Yet the number of students has decreased. The increased cost of living made it necessary in 1849 to raise the salaries which had been established in 1827, with a consequent operating deficit. Under these circumstances the college must choose its course. If the officers are not competent they should be removed; if they are continued in office there are two choices open to the college: either continue to be a mere preparatory school for the professions of Law, Medicine, and Divinity, in which case an addition of \$50,000 to the funds will be needed—and this may be only a temporary expedient; or, adapt the system of education so that all classes of the community will benefit (pp. 47-9).

Were an institution to be established now with the intention of adapting its instruction to the wants of the whole community, its arrangements would be made in harmony with eight principles, of which we need concern ourselves with the first and third only.

1. The present system of adjusting collegiate study to a fixed term of four years, or to any other term, must be abandoned, and every student be allowed, within limits to be determined by statute, to carry on, at the same time, a greater or less number of courses as he may choose.

3. The various courses should be so arranged, that, in so far as it is practicable, every student might study what he chose, all that he chose, and nothing but what he chose. The faculty, however, at the request of a parent or guardian,



should have authority to assign to any student, such courses as they might deem for his advantage (pp. 51-2). The courses in such an institution might be as follows: Latin, Greek, three modern languages, Pure Mathematics, Mechanics, Optics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Physiology, Geology, English and Rhetoric, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, Political Economy, History, Science of Teaching, Principles of Agriculture, Application of Chemistry to the Arts, Application of Science to the Arts and the Science of Law (pp. 52-3).

If this plan were adopted at Brown it would relieve the embarrassments of the institution by putting it in a condition to support itself at the least expense to its friends. Under conditions existing at present, no New England college can be wholly self-supporting, as all colleges are offering education so far below cost that it is doubtful if it could be disposed of at cost price. Therefore there is no other way of making a college self-supporting "than by extending its advantages to every class . . . and thus increasing the number of pupils. The more it can do for itself, the less need its friends do for it." Should the expectations of the committee be realized the number of students will be increased largely from classes who receive no benefit whatever from the college system as it now exists (pp. 52-5).

The proposed plan of reorganization should be adopted for the following reasons:

1. "It is Just. . . . If every man who is willing to pay for them, has an *equal* right to the benefits of education, every man has a *special* right to that *kind* of education which will be of the greatest value to him in the prosecution of useful industry. . . .

2. "It is Expedient. . . . Civilization is advancing, and it can only advance in the line of the useful arts. It is, therefore, of the greatest national importance to spread broadcast



over the community, that knowledge, by which alone the useful arts can be multiplied and perfected (p. 57).

3. "It is Necessary. . . . Men who do not design to educate their sons for the professions, are capable of determining upon the kind of instruction which they need. If the colleges will not furnish it, they are able to provide it themselves."

Here Wayland was referring to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute established in 1824, the Lawrence Scientific School about to open at Harvard, and other steps to provide practical instruction.

The Report also made important recommendations in the matter of degrees. It proposed to adopt a system of equivalents whereby a degree would be conferred upon knowledge, though the kind of knowledge which makes up the necessary amount may differ in different cases (p. 73). In the eyes of some historians this proposal was fatal to Wayland's whole plan because it resulted in a cheapening of the degree.

The Report arrived at the following conclusions:

1. This college cannot, under any circumstances, be long sustained without a large addition to its funds.

2. An addition to its funds would not increase the numbers unless a large provision were made for gratuitous tuition.

3. This would not increase the number of educated men.

The Report concluded,

There is reason to hope that the same amount of funds which would be necessary to sustain the college under the present system, might, if the system were modified in the manner above suggested, add greatly to the number of students, and, at the same time, confer inestimable advantage on every class of society.

It was, therefore, voted that the sum of \$125,000 be raised before the plan was declared effective.

The plans to reorganize Brown University created a great sensation in educational circles because it

was not a mere "academic" discussion, but an actual program for a well-known college [wrote Professor Bronson]. It was also a trenchant criti-



cism of the collegiate system of the United States; it struck the democratic note strongly in its plea for an education that would fit the needs of all classes; and it sought to bring lecture-room and laboratory into vital relations with the material welfare of an immense new country awaiting development. The last two features won its popular favor at once. The newspapers greeted with applause the New Education that was to leave the cloister and walk among modern men at their daily toil. Merchants, manufacturers, farmers, artisans, legislators all saw something worth while in this "practical" form of instruction.<sup>93</sup>

President Wayland had wisely submitted the plan to several friends before presenting it to the conservative corporation. He was armed with many letters of approval; that of George R. Russell, '21, is typical:

College has been a patented machine for ministers, doctors and lawyers . . . I hope we may have something more in keeping with the times . . . something for everyday use not for holiday wear, something available to all, graduated to the wants of all—a widespread universal blessing, of which everyone may partake according to the measure of his desires and ambitions.<sup>94</sup>

Wayland was careful to obtain the approval of various societies, the Franklin Lyceum, the Franklin Society, The Providence Association of Manufacturers, and also the General Assembly. Governor Henry B. Anthony, editor of *The Providence Journal* and a close friend of Wayland's, was able to write on May 7th: "we have had considerable opportunity to test public sentiment [about the Report] and we find general opinion is decidedly in its favor." And on June 20th: "We hear but one opinion of the plan. It has appealed successfully to the common sense of the whole country."

The magazine writers took more time to consider and weigh President Wayland's proposals; on the whole they were more critical. Nathan Bishop, '37, a trustee and well-known educator, is willing to grant that the law of supply and demand may apply to "an education for specific pur-

<sup>93</sup> Bronson, p. 275.

<sup>94</sup> George R. Russell, Letter, West Roxbury, January 31, 1850, Brown Archives.



poses" *i.e.*, civil engineering, "but when applied to education in general, preparatory to an education for specific purposes and especially to the higher form of intellectual and spiritual culture, the principle signally fails, and ever must fail, till man becomes greedy for learning as they now are for lucre."<sup>95</sup> An article in the *North American Review* (sometimes attributed to John Chipman Gray, though he was but twelve years old at the time), remarks that it is a bold experiment to let the student study "what he chooses, etc." He doubts the practicability but is glad the attempt is to be made under such respectable auspices.<sup>96</sup>

More than ninety years after the event it is clear that the one vital feature in Wayland's plan was the system which permitted the student to choose courses which would be of use in after life. In this respect the plan met the desire close to the heart of every young American—for an education which would enable him to get on in the world. It gave him an equality of opportunity and a feeling of freedom of choice so important to the independent citizen of the United States. The idea caught on, and still persists, as even a casual glance at the catalogue of any state university will demonstrate. For example, home economics, typewriting, and French, each earn an equivalent credit, and the composite result is dubbed education.

When proposing that Harvard adopt an elective system, President Eliot had in mind no such hodge-podge. On the plane of higher education, as understood in Europe, he believed in giving the student free choice of his studies. He was not too much concerned with democratic equality of opportunity, and assuredly not at all interested in vocational training. His purpose was to give the deserving student a

<sup>95</sup> Nathan Bishop, "President Wayland's Report," *Christian Review* (July, 1850), vol. 15, pp. 442-59.

<sup>96</sup> "Wayland on College Education in America," *North American Review* (Jan., 1851), vol. 72, pp. 60-84.



chance to select his own intellectual diet. Individualist that he was, it mattered little that some individuals were bound to get intellectual dyspepsia, and that others would receive almost no nourishment, so long as the worthy student had his chance to feast at the table. Yet there is no doubt that Eliot's open advocacy of the elective system, taking up the pure idea where Wayland left off, had tremendous influence in shaping the educational thought of America. He failed, however, to restrict his idea, and it was twisted to suit the purposes of those who knew that at bottom the average American wants limited vocational training only, though he insists that it be called education.

Popular as the idea has since become, Wayland was in advance of his time. His plan won many expressions of approval from without the walls but only mild acquiescence within the citadel. His sons wrote:

It is probable that there was not in the corporation a majority who fully approved of the plan; yet they were unwilling to take the responsibility of opposing a measure which, in the judgment of the president, promised the only means of saving the college from decline, and of opening to it a field of enlarged usefulness.<sup>97</sup>

In other words Wayland was left to carry the flag without united support. Quickly it became apparent that the faculty was divided. His loyal supporters rallied wholeheartedly around him, but many, perhaps the majority indulged in passive resistance. The plan involved much additional work and little increase in compensation. In all probability to a man of Wayland's limited financial experience the addition of \$125,000 to the college funds appeared to be adequate. Actually it was entirely insufficient to carry the proposed increases in the number of regular courses, let alone the suggested additions. Thus before he started Wayland was under an almost insuperable handicap. He made one further mis-

<sup>97</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, p. 93.



take, which experience should have enabled him to avoid: he debased the college degree by the introduction of the partial courses described above. In the *Yale Report of 1828*—with which Wayland must have been familiar—President Day had warned that it was to the best interest of a college to keep its standards high and its degrees respected.<sup>98</sup>

Such was Wayland's intention. And it can be argued without laboring, that attainment, not length of residence, should be the criterion of an education. A half century later President Eliot introduced a three-year course for the A.B. degree without any depreciation of Harvard's standards. Once again Wayland appears to be in advance of the times. Bronson, official historian of Brown, complains that President Wayland made a fatal mistake. He mourns:

It is disappointing, even humiliating, that a scheme of reform which set out to cure superficiality in collegiate education, and raise the standard of scholarship, should have resulted in degrading the degree of Master of Arts, which had at least stood for a certain mental maturity, in giving the degree of Bachelor of Arts for one fourth less work than before, and in creating a new collegiate degree which might be won by persons entering college with little more than a common-school education. The disappointment is the greater because the elective system, and the infusion of a larger amount of the scientific and practical into the curriculum, did not at all necessitate any lowering of standards, as President Wayland had himself affirmed in his treatise of 1842.

Why then, he asks, did the President make the requirements easier and shorten the time of residence?

The report of March 28 and the new laws show there can be but one answer: the President wished to spread the benefits of collegiate education more widely among the people, and he wished to see more students paying tuition into the treasury of Brown University. To what extent the democratic motive dominated the pecuniary it is impossible to decide, but doubtless each was sincere and powerful.<sup>99</sup>

Of the sincerity of Wayland's democratic motive this writer has not the slightest doubt. And it was plain common

<sup>98</sup> *Yale Report*, pp. 317-8.

<sup>99</sup> Bronson, pp. 282-3.



sense for him to attempt to put Brown on a paying basis. Without a solvent college he had no vehicle for his concepts of democratic education. He sincerely believed he had found a way, not only to preserve the college but to make it stronger. For more than twenty years he had been a recognized leader in the community; he had been accustomed to have his leadership accepted and he expected it to be in this case. But his plan was too radical, the drag of inertia and conservatism defeated him. Probably the almost immediate increase in attendance was as much due to the great publicity given the New System as to the lowered requirements. From a total enrollment of 174, in 1850-51, the number jumped to 283, in 1853-54. But in 1854-55 it dropped again to 252. This signalled the end of Wayland's presidency.

He had undertaken too radical a reform and he was left to do too much of it unaided. At the end of the first year he wrote: "I would not, for any earthly consideration, go through the same work again." In 1852 Dr. Caswell was appointed Regent to relieve him of some duties. But he seemed incapable of letting up; in fact, in addition to his college duties he published two books, the *Memoir of the Life and Labors of Adoniram Judson* in 1853, and *The Elements of Intellectual Philosophy* in 1854. In acknowledging a presentation copy of the latter, a friend wrote: "I wonder, my dear sir, how you find time to accomplish so much." "Alas! the explanation became in time painfully obvious," wrote his sons: "Like a steamer whose fuel is exhausted, he was supplying motive power from the fabric of his own being." In the summer of 1855 he found he could no longer continue to carry the load, "I was convinced that I could not have discharged my duties for another year. . . ." His resignation was accepted at a special meeting of the corporation, August 21, 1855. His sons wrote that "when the bell rang for the opening exercises of the new term, Dr. Wayland was



walking through George street, not far from the residence of the late Professor Goddard. He stopped and listened. To one of his former pupils . . . he said: "No one can conceive the unspeakable relief and freedom which I feel at this moment to hear that bell ring, and to know, for the first time in nearly twenty-nine years, that it calls me to no duty."<sup>100</sup> No doubt at the time he meant what he said. But in a previously unpublished letter, dated July 28, 1859, to his old college friend Bishop Alonzo Potter he wrote:

You cannot keep a college in a right course any longer than while you hold the helm yourself. I almost ruined myself in laboring for this college, and I believe that I saw its true position. As soon as I left it, all retrogressed, and my work for 27 years is nil.<sup>101</sup>

The Reverend Barnas Sears, '25, who succeeded to the presidency, was in no enviable position. He had been President of Newton Theological Institution from 1836 to 1848, a Fellow of Brown, 1841-51. As Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education he had heartily approved the New System before it was put into effect. But there was no denying that it was not working well. Yet it was not easy to make changes without hurting the feelings of ex-President Wayland, still a Fellow, and living within a mile of the Campus.

Conditions were so unsatisfactory that President Sears felt compelled to report them to the Executive Board. The following extracts contain the substance of his criticisms:

It seems to be the united opinion of the Faculty that the character & reputation of the University are injuriously affected by the low standard of scholarship required for the degrees of A.M. & A.B. It is well known that the best students of preparatory schools, which would naturally direct their pupils to this college, now go elsewhere. . . . This results chiefly from the interpretation which is generally given to our peculiar & lowered standard of degrees as an open act of underbidding other colleges, & as a scramble for an increased number of students. Even the

<sup>100</sup> *Memoir*, vol. 2, pp. 144-50.

<sup>101</sup> MS. Letter, Brown University Archives.



personal relations of our professors are humiliating, so that their intercourse with the officers of other colleges is a source of mortification rather than of pleasure. No college has ever resorted to extra measures in order to facilitate the acquisition of academic honors without incurring the ridicule & contempt of other colleges. . . . We are now literally receiving the refuse of other colleges. . . . Beside the meanness attributed to us in pretending to a superiority which we do not possess, there is the evil of disturbing a common system of academic honors understood & interpreted alike all over the country. If each college is to have its own private interpretation of the degrees it confers, the whole subject will lose its dignity & its utility. . . . Every member of the Faculty is dissatisfied with our present laws in respect to degrees.<sup>102</sup>

We are not here concerned with the changes made by President Sears to remedy the unsatisfactory conditions, but it is important to notice that a sense of relief pervaded the college. *The Brown Paper* in the issue of 1857, remarked approvingly:

Under his [President Sears'] government the University has returned from the experiment of the last few years, towards the good old system—a change which has been hailed by the undergraduates, at least, with undivided favor.<sup>103</sup>

The stature of Wayland as an educator must be gauged by the magnitude and scope of his ideas rather than by the failure of his valiant efforts to effect a radical reform at conservative Brown University. Under the circumstances no one could have succeeded. Wayland's ideas, on the other hand, proved to be prophetic; his democratic proposals for vocational training have not only been adopted, they have preëmpted nearly the whole field of education.

We have noticed his original proposals in *Thoughts on the Present Collegiate System in the United States* published in 1842, and their further development in the *Report to the Corporation of 1850* into a practical program for reform at Brown. His final educational creed is found in the address delivered on the occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Presidency of Eliphalet Nott, at Union College, September 1854, *Educa-*

<sup>102</sup> President Sears report to the Executive Board, July 5, 1856, Brown University Archives.

<sup>103</sup> Bronson, p. 325.



*tion Demanded by the People of the United States.* After stating that the English Universities which are so widely imitated in America, are unsuited for the United States, he asks:

Is it not imperative on us to set an example for ourselves? In a free country like our own, unembarrassed by precedents, and not yet entangled by the vested rights of by-gone ages, ought we not to originate a system of education which shall raise to high intellectual culture the whole mass of our people? When our systems of education shall look with as kindly an eye on the mechanic as the lawyer, on the manufacturer and merchant as the minister; when every artizan, performing his process with a knowledge of the laws by which it is governed, shall be transformed from an unthinking laborer into a practical philosopher; and when the benign principles of Christianity shall imbue the whole mass of our people with the spirit of universal love, then, and not till then, shall we illustrate to the nations the blessings of Republican and Christian Institutions.<sup>104</sup>

This still remains an unrealized ideal.

In a recent address William H. Cowley, President of Hamilton College said:

Obviously Wayland wielded a powerful pen and used it to advantage in demanding a necessary reform in higher education. All the measures which he proposed did not turn out to be sound. That is not important. What is important is that he read his times aright and urged that something be done to harmonize education with the life of the nation. Today we think of Eliot, White, and Gilman as the great leaders of nineteenth century education, but Wayland antedated and prepared the way for them. They stood on his shoulders, and in no small measure they were giants because he was a giant.<sup>105</sup>

President Eliot did not hesitate to acknowledge his indebtedness to President Wayland. Speaking before the Harvard Club of Rhode Island in 1885—after he had successfully established his elective system—he said: “When the future historian of the elective system, writes an orderly and full account of its rise and progress, he will give a high place, among those who served that cause, to President Francis Wayland.”<sup>106</sup>

<sup>104</sup> *Education Demanded*, p. 29.

<sup>105</sup> William H. Cowley, “Two Gentlemen of Union,” *Sigma XI Quarterly*, No. 28 (Summer, 1940), pp. 69-73.

<sup>106</sup> Charles W. Eliot, “Harvard in 1885,” *Third Club Book*, Harvard Club of Rhode Island, 1882-1932 (Providence, 1932), p. 15.















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